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NINTH PLENUM SPEECH OF JERZY TEPICHT ON INCREASING POLAND'S AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

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[The following report of Jerzy Tepicht, Director of the Institute of Agricultural Economics, was given at the Ninth Plenum of the KC PZPR (Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party), held in Warsaw on 29-30 October 1953.

The report was given at the plenum as an amplification of the featured report of Premier Boleslaw Bierut, "Task of Party in Struggle to Raise Standard of Living of Workers in Current Phase of Building Socialism." An English-language translation of Bierut's report is available in the PAP (Polish Press Agency) release of 6 November 1953, pages 1-44.]

I wish to speak about two aspects of the theses: (1) production and the class struggle and (2) the connection between our struggle for production and the Lenin three-in-one formula as a guiding line for our over-all policy in the class struggle in the village.

Only a few weeks ago, one still heard the false surmise that "the poor people have disappeared in our country." This was a one-sided viewpoint and was based on the great increase in supplementary earnings of the rural population employed in industry, on state farms, etc. This is true, of course, if you consider that in Rzeszow Wojewodztwo in 1948, only 19 percent of families earning supplementary income was employed in the socialized sector. In 1952, with an over-all increase in earning power, 77 percent was employed in industry and on the state farms. We must remember, however, that in the same Rzeszow Wojewodztwo 80 percent of 3-hectare farms do not have a horse, and that in Poznan and Bydgoszcz wojewodztwos 60 percent of the farmers also do part-time work for the kulaks. There is no doubt that these worker-peasants, despite the relatively higher standard of living, are largely dependent on the kulak for horses and machines. They repay the kulak for this aid by working after factory hours, by having their wives work off the debt, or else they pay several hundred zlotys plus oats and food for the use of a tractor for one day.

Thus, such false surmises lead to the warping of the general political party line in the village. When we lose contact with the poor peasantry and when our central and field apparatus loses sight of the interests of the poor, then we might also find a phenomenon contradictory to the real nature of the people's state -- the kulak encompassing the poor peasant within the sphere of his political influence. There have been many such examples throughout the country. In many instances the kulak has made compulsory milk deliveries for the peasant who had no cow, and then collected from the peasant, in cash, the difference between the state price and the market price. At the same time, the kulak had an opportunity to arouse the peasant against the people's authority.

Let us examine the work of the village MTS. IER (Instytut Ekonomiki Rolnej, Institute of Agricultural Economics) research studies carried on in 21 villages of the so-called prewar territories show that, as late as 1952, the social composition of the farms serviced by the village MTS was as follows: poor peasants 8.4 percent, medium peasants 66.8 percent, kulaks 24.8 percent. Of the total number of 579 poor peasant farms covered by the study, only 6 percent benefited from village MTS services. Comrade Bierut explained the reason for this state of affairs and suggested the remedy.

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To raise the production of small and medium peasants, and at the same time deepen the worker-peasant alliance, we must change conditions still prevailing in some places. Let us give you a characteristic example to illustrate the conditions in the field.

A settlement of 15 poor landholders in Fajslawice Gmina, Krasnostaw Powiat, had been making compulsory deliveries to the state punctually every year. Up to November 1953 the village MTS refused to rent them a threshing machine. They were forced to borrow grain from the kulaks while their own grain was waiting in ricks. Why? Because their neighboring village, very rich, and "important to the plan" was lagging in making deliveries. It had been decided to concentrate all threshing machines in this village. No one in the gmina or the powiat took into account the fact that it might be politically important for the poor village to fulfill the plan, thus setting an example to the medium farmers and helping to break down the kulak sabotage of deliveries.

It is not a question of multiplying examples. It is a question of implementing the recommendations of today's plenum concerning the support of the poor peasants and, as Bierut has said, some comrades were so late in remembering. It is a question of fully utilizing, in a proper class manner, all the measures contained in these theses -- relief from and a more flexible system of deliveries for the poor peasant, aid in buying a cow, contracts for young pigs, aid in construction, and strengthening the village MTS and relating its activities to the decree on neighborly assistance.

To reach this goal, we must change -- let us be frank -- the social composition of some party organizations, since these serve as indicators of conditions.

The poor peasantry, which reacts easily to the activities of the class enemy if properly stirred, is also an indicator. We refer to the white stains [places having no primary party organizations] in the village as regards party organizations. Closer scrutiny would show that these are found mostly in old villages where agricultural reform had little effect. In such villages, our first resource is the poor peasant. Largely through him we can reach these villages. There are also some village party organizations whose members found their way into the party during the period of party development; they were not influenced by its revolutionary activities but joined for personal reasons. These later became associated with kulaks and speculators and became like them. Now, in a number of gminas and even powiats, they constitute a wall between the party and the poor peasantry, or even the mass of working peasants.

The social composition of producers cooperatives also evokes questionable exceptions. The general census shows that 23 percent of the total farms in Poland are 2-hectare farms and smaller, 31.4 percent are from 2 to 5 hectares, 32.7 percent are from 5 to 10 hectares, and 8.3 percent are from 10 to 15 hectares. In producers cooperatives the first category forms 7 percent, the second 15.7 percent, the third 62.8 percent, and the last 13 percent. This is calculated on a national scale. The situation is much worse on the wojewodztwo or powiat scale. As shown, the percentage of medium farmers in producers cooperatives is greater than their percentage in the over-all figure.

It is a good sign that large groups of medium farmers continue to join the producers cooperatives, but it is a very unhealthy phenomenon that the percentage of small farmers in the producers cooperatives is so much smaller than their percentage in the over-all figure for the country. This is the result of a mistaken idea, not yet eliminated in the field, that only a cooperative made up of economically strong farms is economically strong. We must explain to our activists that a strong cooperative is one in which there is work discipline, one in which the members are concerned with the number and value of standard work-day units. Who is most interested in this? Obviously the poor peasant who

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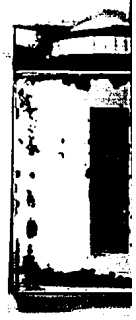

has no means of production and is the object of kulak exploitation. The poor peasantry has the most to gain from the socialist transformation of the village and the development and strengthening of the producers cooperatives. Thus it should become a guarantee of their political and economic strength.

The precongress program should include a closer understanding of the poor peasantry, an understanding of it in its locale. For instance, we have four powiats in Mazury in which most of the peasants work for the kulaks to pay for land, for horses, for machines, or for food. Lands are still available in western and northern Poland to settlers from the overcrowded southeastern areas. It is worth considering ways and means of allotting land to this category of peasants, thus removing them from kulak domination and neo-Hitlerite propaganda. We must not forget that a great percentage of the local populace of Opole, although employed largely in socialist industry, is still working for the kulaks, the greatest exploiters in our country.

I wish to touch on a basic element in the strengthening of our alliance with the medium peasant, who has become the central figure of our agriculture. We have become accustomed to the term "medium peasant," but we must take into account the various types of medium peasants. In the struggle for increased agricultural production and for the gradual transformation of agriculture to socialist agriculture, we must make a distinction between the old medium peasant who existed before the war and who improved his situation under the people's authority, and the new medium peasant who came into being through agricultural reform and the resettlement program.

Generally, the party activists and the state direct their attention to the new medium peasant as a more likely candidate for producers cooperatives. This one-sided interest is very erroneous, especially with regard to the peasant himself. We are forgetting that he is an individual peasant who probably has not had time to get a good start on the land he received from the state, and who needs our aid in production. That this attitude is erroneous is proved by an analysis of the books of several medium peasant farms in Poznan and Wroclaw wojewodztwos. In 1950-1951 most of these farms used the state and village MTS services. In 1952 they went back to using kulak machines, for which they paid in labor or grain, thus enabling the kulak to speculate.

The development of producers cooperatives forced the individual peasants to take this step. The village MTS formerly restricted themselves to servicing individual farms. When the state MTS took over the village MTS, they also took over the larger village MTS machines, especially threshing machines. As a result, while winning some medium peasants for producers cooperatives, we were forcing their neighbors to ask help of the kulaks. We were thus breaking one of the most important ties, one which was supposed to influence them in joining the producers cooperatives voluntarily. It would be difficult to find a better example of the harm resulting from the view that the two tasks-socialist transformation of the village and increased agricultural production are contradictory.

We could cite many examples. Medium peasants whose farms had been disrupted by accidents to horses or cattle, or by their inability to construct buildings, etc., found themselves, in many instances, in very difficult situations.

The theses being discussed at today's plenum clearly show the measures necessary to improve the welfare of this new category of medium peasant -- assistance, substitute crop deliveries, reduction of progressive taxes in certain areas, and, especially, concrete aid in production.

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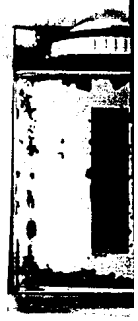

The onesidedness of our approach to the alliance with the medium peasant is more marked in the case of the "old" medium peasant. It is no accident that our ties with the medium peasant masses are much weaker in the eastern half of Poland, where the old medium peasant is most numerous. We all know that the development of producers cooperatives is much weaker in the east than in the west. But does this pertain only to producers cooperatives?

Recently we worked out a map showing the density of industrial crop contracts in individual powiats for 1952. In five powiats of Szczecin Wojewodztwo, individual peasant farmers have contracted 5 to 10 hectares of industrial crops for each 100 hectares of arable land; in 6 powiats the contracts cover even more area. For this same period, Lodz Wojewodztwo showed the contracted areas in two powiats as 3-5 hectares for each 100 hectares of arable land, while the majority of powiats showed contracts covering 1-3 hectares, and in some powiats less than one hectare per 100 hectares had been contracted. Is not this neglect of the development of one of the most important ties with the old medium peasantry the real reason for the undevelopment of producers cooperatives in these areas?

Comrade Stasiak's criticism of the harmful theory of "the worse, the better" was just. All our party activists must understand that the peasant in a proletarian state should approach socialism not from desperation, but from a growing confidence in the party and the people's authority, associated with the improvement of his farm and his welfare. It would be a mistake for us to forget that the medium peasant is also expanding in the direction of capitalism. Stalin taught that the medium peasant farm is a "farm at the crossroads" between socialism and capitalism. How then can we consider guiding the old medium peasant en masse toward the new course of development without creating the indispensable bridges -- all the forms of our economic alliance in the village.

We have forgotten about this especially in Lublin Wojewodztwo where, after the first period of honest successes in developing producers cooperatives, we tried to leap into the next phase, eliminating the basis of good will. We had forgotten that the first successes had been largely achieved in parcelled farms in the area of the new medium farmer. In shifting our attention to the old medium farmer, we should have first tried to form various alliances.

We must clearly comprehend two things, that the effort to win these villages over to cooperative economy must go hand in hand with a special effort to develop the lower type cooperative, which has a special meaning in the struggle for the old medium peasant; and that the path to the villages leads through the poor peasant, who is our main support in these villages.

This was also forgotten in Lublin Wojewodztwo, where the leftist trouble makers joined with the rightist opportunists. It is no accident that most complaints of lack of interest in their grievances come from the poor peasants. It is no accident that because of high-speed organizing methods, the administration of the producers cooperatives in Wlodawo Powiat does not present a very edifying picture. Of the total of 128 members, 7 have farms of 2 hectares, 23 have 2-5 hectares, 70 have 5-10 hectares, 23 have 10-15 hectares (this category includes many kulaks), and 5 have 15-20 hectares.

The Central Committee's theses show that we must fight the class enemy, the kulak, unceasingly. From our experience in the field and in the central offices, it is very clear that unless we recognize the poor peasant, we cannot see his exploiter, the kulak.

Let me cite two examples from Mogilno Powiat, Trzemeszno Gmina. Jozef Smiatacz, a kulak with 96 hectares of land, had been assessed an additional 50 percent windfall tax. Within a few days, before he could pay this tax, 15 of his cows were sold at public auction. Another kulak in this gmina, Edmund Paluch,

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received an advance of 300,000 zlotys in 1952 on a contracted crop of herbs, which he did not deliver. In 1953 he received another contract for 8 hectares of flax; again he did not deliver. This same Paluch had also received neighborly assistance organized by the party, in the form of student aid in the spring.

In the eyes of the local activists, Jozef Smiatacz, is the "obvious kulak" found in almost every powiat and cited in many speeches, correspondence, and reports as proof that the powiat is fighting the class enemy. Edmund Paluch, the second kulak, belongs to the category which received aid in the name of the struggle for increased production. The results of such struggle for production are shown by the fact that recently Paluch, having ruined his farm, requested the state to take it over. He is trying to get an administrative post in the state farms.

Thus we have in one gmina a crystal clear example of leftism and opportunism.

Comrade Minc has clearly explained the proper forms of combat to be used against the kulak in the present stage. Unfortunately when it comes to obvious kulaks, some activists resort to the alternative -- either eliminate them or persuade them to join the producers cooperative. We have been unable to impress upon activists in the field that they have the task of (1) forcing kuleks to fulfill loyally their responsibilities to the government, (2) restricting exploitation by the kulaks, and (3) isolating them politically from the small and medium peasants.

We must endeavor to unify our methods of awakening the peasant masses to production responsibilities and to the class struggle; these two problems are inseparable. Only by unifying these methods can we put an end to the harmful tendency of dividing the village into cooperative members and nonmembers, instead of into peasants working collectively and individually on the one side and their exploiters, the kulaks, on the other side.

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